



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION IX  
75 Hawthorne Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

May 22, 2008

Ms. Sheryl Parker  
HQ ACC/A7PP  
129 Andrews Street  
Suite 122  
Langley AFB, VA. 23665-2769


Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) F-35 Force Development  
Evaluation and Weapons School Beddown (CEQ# 20080122)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above-referenced document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and our NEPA review authority under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. Our comments are provided in accordance with the EPA-specific extension to the comment deadline date from May 19, 2008 to May 22, 2008, granted by Michael Estrada, Public Affairs Office, Nellis Air Force Base on May 7, 2008.

We have rated the DEIS as Environmental Concerns – Insufficient Information (EC-2) (see enclosed "*Summary of Rating Definitions*") due to our concerns with the direct and cumulative increase in noise that would disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations in the vicinity of Nellis Air Force Base (Nellis AFB).

We appreciate the opportunity to review this DEIS. When the FEIS is released for public review, please send one hard copy and one CD ROM to the address above (mail code: CED-2). If you have any questions, please contact me at (415) 972-3846 or Laura Fujii, the lead reviewer for this project. Laura can be reached at (415) 972-3852 or [fujii.laura@epa.gov](mailto:fujii.laura@epa.gov).

Sincerely,

*For*   
Nova Blazej, Manager  
Environmental Review Office

Enclosure:  
Summary of EPA Rating Definitions  
Detailed Comments

cc: Honorable Michael L. Montandon, Mayor, City of North Las Vegas  
Mr. Mark Morse, BLM-Las Vegas Field Office

# SUMMARY OF EPA RATING DEFINITIONS

This rating system was developed as a means to summarize EPA's level of concern with a proposed action. The ratings are a combination of alphabetical categories for evaluation of the environmental impacts of the proposal and numerical categories for evaluation of the adequacy of the EIS.

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE ACTION

### *"LO" (Lack of Objections)*

The EPA review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

### *"EC" (Environmental Concerns)*

The EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce the environmental impact. EPA would like to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

### *"EO" (Environmental Objections)*

The EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that must be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

### *"EU" (Environmentally Unsatisfactory)*

The EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potentially unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the CEQ.

## ADEQUACY OF THE IMPACT STATEMENT

### *Category 1" (Adequate)*

EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis or data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

### *"Category 2" (Insufficient Information)*

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analysed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

### *"Category 3" (Inadequate)*

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analysed in the draft EIS, which should be analysed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the NEPA and/or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

\*From EPA Manual 1640, "Policy and Procedures for the Review of Federal Actions Impacting the Environment."

**EPA DETAILED DEIS COMMENTS F-35 FORCE DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION AND WEAPONS SCHOOL BEDDOWN, NELLIS AFB, NV, MAY 22, 2008**

**Mitigation of Noise Effects**

***Provide additional specific commitments to mitigate adverse noise effects.*** The beddown of 36 F-35 fighter aircraft at Nellis Air Force Base (Nellis AFB) would expose an additional 13,917 persons and 11 more sensitive receptors, including 7 more schools, to noise levels of 65 Day-Night Average Sound Level (DNL) or greater (p. 2-45, p. 4.8-2). The Federal Interagency Committee on Urban Noise states that noise exposure greater than 65 DNL is considered generally unacceptable over public services or residential, cultural, recreational, and entertainment areas (p. 4.3-1). Further, this increase in noise would disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations, affecting 42% minority and 16% low-income populations of the total population in the vicinity of Nellis AFB (p. 4.8-1).

The Air Force commits to continued use of existing noise abatement procedures which include operational measures and continued coordination with Clark County on land use planning (p. 3.3-8). The DEIS acknowledges that there would be a noticeable increase in noise complaints and levels of annoyance from residents adjacent to the base (p. 4.3-3). EPA is concerned with the increased noise levels over residential areas, sensitive receptors, and disproportionate effects on environmental justice communities. Our concern is heightened given the cumulative effects of the doubling of historical noise effects caused by the 2002 to 2008 beddown of 17 F-22 Raptor aircraft at Nellis AFB (1999 DEIS F-22 Aircraft Force Development Evaluation and Weapons School Beddown).

***Recommendation:***

We recommend the FEIS include a list of additional specific commitments to mitigate the adverse noise effects of the F-35 beddown and the cumulative impacts of the F-35 beddown in combination with the F-22 beddown. Mitigation options include additional public involvement in noise abatement decisions, education programs on noise attenuation measures, assessments of the adequacy of existing sound proofing, and funding and technical assistance to sensitive receptors and communities to reduce the adverse noise levels.

***Provide a public outreach and education program to inform recreation visitors about noise effects.*** In addition to the increase in subsonic noise, there would be an increase of sonic booms by 2 to 4 per month within the Desert Military Operations Area (MOA)/Elgin airspace and Desert MOA/Coyote airspace. The average number of sonic booms per month in these MOAs is 35 and 12 sonic booms, respectively, under a 350,000 sortie-operations scenario (p. 4.6-6). The Key Pittman Wildlife Management Area, White River Petroglyphs, Beaver Dam State Park, and Ella Mountain recreation areas are under these MOAs (Figure 3.6-6, p. 3.6-20). Recreation visitors would be exposed to these sonic booms which may be perceived as annoying in a wilderness setting.

***Recommendation:***

Given the increased number of sonic booms and the significant increase in population in Clark and Lincoln Counties (p. 5-5), we recommend the Air Force and Nevada Test and Training Range (NTTR) implement a public outreach and educational program about aircraft operations and their associated noise effects. For instance, we recommend working with the appropriate land use managers to develop interpretive signs for the affected recreation areas that explain aircraft operations and associated noise effects and sonic booms.

**Pollution Prevention**

***Salvage, recycle, and reuse demolition waste. Use materials with recycled content.*** The F-35 beddown would require construction of new facilities, and alteration and demolition of existing facilities (p. 2-31).

***Recommendation:***

Maximize resource conservation and pollution prevention in accordance with Executive Order 13148 Greening the Government Through Leadership in Environmental Management. We recommend the project design include the salvage, recycling, and reuse of the demolition waste. We also recommend new construction maximize the use of materials with recycled content. Useful tools and resources may be found at <http://www.epa.gov/industrialmaterials/> and in EPA's March 2008 Industrial Materials Recycling: Tools and Resources Guide which can be obtained from EPA's Industrial Materials Recycling Program, U.S. EPA's Office of Solid Waste (MC 5306P), Washington, DC, 20460.